

draft

THOMPSON RIVER CO-GEN PROJECT

MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action

Power Line Easement

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

3. Name of Project

Thompson River Co-Gen Project

4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)

Thompson River Co-Gen, LLC
P.O. Box 2780
249 Airport Road
Thompson Falls, Montana 59873
Phone (406) 827-9690
Fax (406) 827-9693

5. If Applicable: For Power line

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Commencement date is contingent upon FWP
Commission approval of easement.
Estimated Completion Date: December 2003
Current Status of Project Design (% complete) 100%

6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)

Township 21 North, Range 29 West, Section 13 P.M.M., Sanders County

7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

(a) Developed:	(d) Floodplain.....__ acres
residential __ acres	
industrial..... __ acres	(e) Productive:
	irrigated cropland__ acres
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/ Recreation 1.93 acres	dry cropland__ acres
	forestry.....__ acres
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	rangeland__ acres
Areas..... __ acres	other.....__ acres

draft

8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

Attached

9. **Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.**

The project proposes a 1,400'-x-60' power line easement across the Mt. Silcox Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for construction of a 115kv transmission line for delivery of electrical power from the Thompson River Co-Gen Project to NorthWestern Energy for service to Montana consumers. In exchange for the grant of a power line easement, the Thompson River Co-Gen, LLC, would agree to do weed control on the Mt. Silcox WMA. FWP would require weed control for a value equal to the Fair Market Value of the easement grant. In addition, the Grantee will be responsible for noxious weed control within the easement area for as long as the easement is in existence.

10. **Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

(a) Permits:

Agency Name _____ Permit _____ Date Filed/# _____

N/A

(b) Funding:

Agency Name _____ Funding Amount _____

N/A

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name _____ Type of Responsibility _____

N/A

11. **List of Agencies Consulted during Preparation of the EA:**

N/A

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
<a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
<c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
< a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
<e. For P-R/D-I projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		X				
f. Other		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ≥ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ≥≥ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
< a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
ℳℳl. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		X				
ℳm. For P-R/D-I, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		X				
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ℳ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ℳℳ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. <u>VEGETATION</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4a.
cc f. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. Ground disturbance has the potential to increase the spread of noxious weeds. The application of herbicide the spring after construction is completed should lessen this spread and help mitigate the problem. The Grantee will be responsible for noxious weed control within the easement area for as long as the easement is in existence.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?	X					5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?	X					5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?	X					5g.
4zh. For P-R/D-I, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		X				
4zi. For P-R/D-I, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				
j. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

5b, 5c, & 5g. Increased vehicular traffic along with construction activity may cause stress and relocate both game and nongame from the immediate area of construction. The amount and intensity of disturbance is unknown, but should be short-term in duration.

3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

< Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

4 Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

44 Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. <u>LAND USE</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

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- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-L, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				

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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: _____		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
< e. Define projected revenue sources		X				
< f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				
g. Other: _____		X				

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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

< 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
<c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
∩d. For P-R/D-I, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
<a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
∩d. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		X				
e. Other:		X				

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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
cf. For P-R/D-I, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		X				
ccg. For P-R/D-I, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

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2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative A: No action - This alternative would prohibit Thompson River Co-Gen from tapping into the main powerline. In these instances the power company must find an alternate route or use the condemnation power to acquire the easement. An alternate route was not possible and condemnation is not in the best interest of FWP or the community.

Alternative B: Preferred Alternative - Grant the 1,400'-x-60' power line easement across the Mt. Silcox Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for construction of a 115kv transmission line for delivery of electrical power from the Thompson River Co-Gen Project to NorthWestern Energy for service to Montana consumers. In exchange for the grant of a power line easement, the Thompson River Co-Gen, LLC, would agree to do weed control on the Mt. Silcox WMA. FWP would require weed control for a value equal to the Fair Market Value of the easement grant. In addition, the Grantee will be responsible for noxious weed control within the easement area for as long as the easement is in existence.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

N/A

4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? YES NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

Significant impacts from the construction of a transmission line for delivery of electrical power are not anticipated. Cumulative impacts are judged to be minor and can be mitigated by management controls; therefore, an EIS is not required.

5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

Public involvement will consist of oral and written comments. Due to lack of any significant environmental issues or other controversy, this level of involvement is considered to be appropriate.

6. Duration of comment period if any:

Fifteen days, from November 20 through December 5, 2003. Questions and/or comments should be directed to:

Darlene Edge, Land Agent
Attn: Mt. Silcox Easement EA
Field Services Division
Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P. O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

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7. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Barry Bates
Member Manager
Thompson River Co-Gen, LLC
285 2nd Avenue WN
Kalispell, Montana 59901
Phone: (406) 257-7551
Fax: (406) 257-7578

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

4a. Ground disturbance has the potential to increase the spread of noxious weeds. The application of herbicide the spring after construction is completed should lessen this spread and help mitigate the problem. The Grantee will be responsible for noxious weed control within the easement area for as long as the easement is in existence.

5b, 5c, & 5g. Increased vehicular traffic along with construction activity may cause stress and relocate both game and nongame from the immediate area of construction. The amount and intensity of disturbance is unknown, but should be short-term in duration.